

# Paula Anderson, PMHNP, BC

## ***Why did you choose psychiatric/mental health nursing?***

I chose psychiatric mental health nursing shortly after becoming an RN 30 years ago. I enjoyed my psychiatric clinical rotation in nursing school but decided to try Medical/Surgical nursing first. After 6 months I was bored, took my first position in psych and have loved this work my entire career. I continued to go to school most of my career and have had various psychiatric nursing positions including inpatient staff nursing, outpatient CMH nursing, inpatient Nurse Manager, Clinical Director of a Psychiatric Treatment and Rehabilitation program and Nurse Practitioner.

## ***Please provide a brief description of what you do.***

Currently I am a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner at a Community Mental Health Center in an urban setting. I diagnose, treat and follow individuals with serious mental illnesses such as Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective and Bipolar Disorders. I am also the Michigan Chapter President of the APNA (American Psychiatric Nurses Association).

## ***Please describe your role in the health care team in the region/organization/community where you practice psychiatric/mental health nursing.***

As member of the Healthcare Team I work with the client, their Case Manager, often

Group Home Staff or family, as well as ancillary staff such as Psychologists, OT, PT, and Day Program Workshop Staff to assess how the client is managing with their symptoms and their day to day functioning and support them in their recovery journey.

## ***What do you consider to be the most challenging and most rewarding parts of psychiatric/mental health nursing?***

I have always found PMHN to be stimulating in that each individual presents in a unique way. Developing a good therapeutic relationship is critical to optimizing trust and positive outcomes. Some of the individuals I work with are truly some of most marginalized citizens in our community and deserve excellent care.

## ***What advice do you have for nursing graduates who are considering psychiatric/mental health nursing as a career?***

I would encourage anyone considering mental health to give it a try. Be honest with yourself about how you feel about mental illness, any stigma you may harbor and your commitment to care for individuals with mental illness with the utmost respect and dignity. And, equally important is to commit to lifelong learning.

## ***Other comments.***

Get involved in professional organizations that can support your growth as a mental health nurse. The APNA, American Psychiatric Nurses Association, has a local

Michigan Chapter that provides educational opportunities and will sponsor a statewide conference in Lansing on April 18th, 2015. [www.apna.org](http://www.apna.org). It's easy to get involved.

